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SUBJECT: MALIKI WINS BROAD CONFIDENCE IN A NATIONAL UNITY
GOVERNMENT WITH GAPS

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki won a wide vote of confidence in a national unity cabinet in a special parliament session on May 20, but not before several Sunni Arab parliamentarians walked out of the session protesting their exclusion and a continued deadlock over the security portfolios. They demanded a 48 hour delay of the proceedings to settle differences and resolve the interior and defense ministries. The Ambassador mediated with the dissenters and other members of the Sunni Arab Tawafuq Front in a tense and often furious session outside the parliament hall and convinced them to enter the session with assurances that these concerns could be heard out and addressed in the coming week. Deep cracks appeared in the Sunni Arab bloc, however, even as all sides agreed to settle the outstanding security portfolios over the next week. The final cabinet list -- despite its gaps -- succeeded in winning the support of the vast majority of parliamentary blocs. Even with the Sunni dissidents, Shia Fadhila Party, and several smaller blocs in the opposition, Maliki's government has a claim to represent some 235 of the 275 parliamentarians -- some 85 percent of the parliament.

2 (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The final cabinet also demonstrated that Maliki had made several last-minute accommodations with his rivals in the Shia coalition. SCIRI claimed the finance ministry and a national dialogue state minister post that had originally been intended for the Sunnis, the Sadrists retained all of their service ministries and picked up a state ministry for tourism, and Da'wa Tanzim al-Iraq won both the influential education and trade posts. Maliki faces a continued debate over his security portfolios in the week ahead as well as efforts by Ayad Allawi to put the justice ministry in the hands of a closer ally of his than Hashem al-Shibly. Meanwhile, some Sunni Arab leaders who stormed out of the session have since told Poloffs that they are ready to work with the government provided the interior and defense ministries are settled in a manner that satisfies all concerned. END SUMMARY.

Hewar and Dialogue Council Stage a
Last Minute Protest

13. (C) Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki presented and won a wide vote of confidence in a special parliament session on May 20, but not before a walkout and protests from several Sunni Arab parliamentarians. Salah Mutlak's Hewar Front and the National Dialogue Council faction of the Tawafuq Front -- a total of about 18 parliamentarians -- threatened to boycott the proceedings before they began. They demanded the entire event be pushed off 48 hours so that adjustments could be made to ministry allotments and candidates could be found for interior and defense. The sudden showdown revealed the

depths of the divisions among the parliament's Sunni Arab members as well as the stubbornness of Iraqi leaders in other blocs. Speaker Mashadani, reluctant to convene the parliament while members of his own party fumed outside, urged the Ambassador to mediate. President Talabani declined to intervene himself and Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi flatly turned down a request from the Ambassador to leave the parliament hall and join him in working to calm down his colleagues. Maliki also remained in the hall uninterested in the unrest outside. Only outgoing PM Ibrahim al-Jafari ventured in beside the Ambassador but he was soon overwhelmed by the anger in the air.

¶4. (C) When all of the dissenters were gathered in a room across from the parliament hall, Mutlak and his National Dialogue Council allies unleashed a venomous attack on their Sunni Arab colleagues in the Tawafuq Front. Mutlak accused Adnan Duleimi, a septuagenarian leader in Tawafuq who was also attempting to mediate, of being the "Shaykh of the Conspiracy" that "stole" his ministries. When Duleimi asked Mutlak to be more polite, Mutlak shouted back, "You haven't been polite a day in your life!" The venom seeped outside the room as well. Poloff stepped into a room next door during the stand-off and found National Dialogue Council member Abd al-Nasser al-Janabi and several other parliamentarians surrounding presumptive Sunni Arab DPM Salam al-Zawbai. "You've fallen into an American intelligence trap!" Janabi angrily shouted at a visibly stunned Zawbai.

¶5. (C) The dispute was ostensibly over the last-minute exclusion of Mutlak's group from the government, the large share of Sunni Arab seats taken by the Iraqi Islamic Party, and the continued deadlock over the interior and defense ministries. But it reflected deeper divisions in the Sunni

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Arab community that could yet test the bonds of the new cabinet. Mutlak and others have never forgiven Tareq al-Hashemi's Iraqi Islamic Party for approving the Iraqi constitution, and divisions between these factions go back to the days of the former regime when Mutlak and Ba'athist sympathizers were in power and Sunni Islamists like Hashemi were in exile or in prison. Mutlak accuses Hashemi's Islamic Party of rigging the elections against him. Meanwhile the National Dialogue Council members of the Tawafuq Front regularly claim that their supporters won the Front 44-seats, not the Iraqi Islamic Party. Janabi and others spoke on behalf of the entire Tawafuq Front repeatedly during the confrontation even though their members hold only about seven of the Front's 44 seats.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador, joined by outgoing PM Ibrahim al-Jafari, heard out their concerns while a packed parliament hall waited. The Ambassador urged them to attend the session -- even to abstain or vote no on the cabinet -- and focus their energies on ensuring that the security portfolios are distributed correctly over the next week. The Ambassador also offered to bring together the leading members of the Tawafuq Front -- Khalaf Alayan, VP Tariq al-Hashemi, and Adnan al-Duleimi -- for a fence-mending session in the coming days. With those assurances, Khalaf Alayan directed his group to enter the hall.

Session Proceeds Despite a Walk-out

¶7. (C) The dispute spilled over into the parliament hall moments after the session was convened, however. Hewar Front leader Salah al-Mutlak attempted to steal the spotlight with a personal address of opposition to the Iraqi people. When he was cut off, he made a motion to delay the announcement of the cabinet for two days, a request that was immediately voted down. Then Tawafuq member Abdul Nasr al-Janabi of the National Dialogue Council stood and announced that the final minister list was incomplete, illegal and unrepresentative

and staged a walkout. He and some 15 other parliamentarians -- all from the Dialogue Council and Hewan Front -- filed out of the hall. The wide majority of the 58 Sunni Arab parliamentarians in the hall remained in the session, as did top Tawafuq leaders Tariq al-Hashimi, Adnan Dulaymi, and Speaker Mahmud Mashadani.

Maliki's Cabinet Shows Accommodation
With Shia Coalition Rivals

¶18. (C) The parliament then proceeded to speedily vote through an expanded cabinet list of 38 posts, leaving vacant the security posts of interior, defense, and state minister for national security, all of which will be hashed out in negotiations over the next week. The final cabinet list showed that Maliki had moved far in the final hours to accommodate his rivals in the Shia coalition. The Da'wa Tanzim Iraq faction seated its top officials in the education and trade ministries. Maliki even planned to appoint Da'wa Tanzim Iraq official Shirwan al-Waeli to the Minister of State for Security Affairs post but held off in the morning after the Ambassador made clear that all security appointments needed a closer look over the coming week.

¶19. (C) Maliki bowed to SCIRI's demand to have Bayan Jabr atop the finance ministry and put SCIRI veteran Akram al-Hakim in the newly-created slot of Minister of State for National Dialogue, a position intended originally for Mutlak. Maliki -- despite previously expressed deep reservations on the subject -- also gave in to Sadrist demands to retain control over key service ministries and added a state minister for tourism slot to their share.

Sunnis Ready to Come Back into
Fold with Progress on Security Files

¶10. (C) President Talabani, former PM Jafari, and CoR Speaker Mashadani followed with speeches of their own welcoming the new government and warning of challenges ahead. After the ministers were sworn in and the session recessed, the Sunni Arab walkouts were found still waiting in the cafeteria outside. Al-Janabi later told Poloff that the group was unhappy that the Minister of Defense had not yet been named and left open the possibility of rejoining the government within a few days if their grievances were addressed. The Ambassador plans to convene the key Sunni Arab leaders in the

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coming days and drive forward negotiations on the remaining security slots.

List of the National Unity Cabinet

¶11. (SBU) The final cabinet list -- despite its gaps -- succeeded in winning the support of the vast majority of parliamentary blocs. Even with the Sunni dissidents, Shia Fadhila Party, and several smaller blocs in the opposition, Maliki's government has a claim to represent some 235 of the 275 parliamentarians -- some 85 percent of the parliament. The cabinet represents most of the Shia coalition and Tawafuq Fronts, the Kurdistan Alliance, the Iraqiyya List, and the Kurdistan Islamic Union.

¶12. (SBU) The following are the names of the cabinet ministers approved by the CoR (with party affiliation if known). The list includes four women who will serve as minister of human rights, environment, housing and the minister of state for women's affairs:

BEGIN LIST:

The Prime Ministership:

PRIME MINISTER: Nuri al-Maliki, Shia Arab, UIC
DPM: Barham Salih, Sunni Kurd, PUK
DPM: Salam al-Zawbai, Sunni Arab, Tawafuq

The "Sovereign" Ministries:

ELECTRICITY: Karim Wahid al-Hassan, Shia Arab, Independent
FOREIGN MINISTRY: Hoshyar Zebari, Sunni Kurd, KDP
OIL: Husayn Shahrastani, Shia Arab, UIC Independent
FINANCE: Bayan Jabr, Shia Arab, UIC SCIRI
INTERIOR: Under the temporary direction of the PM.
DEFENSE: Under the temporary direction of DPM Zawbai.

The Regular Ministries:

WATER RESOURCES: Abd al-Latif Rashid, Sunni Kurd, PUK
INDUSTRY: Fawzi Harriri, Christian, Assyrian, KDP
HOUSING: Bayan Dizayee, Sunni Kurd, KDP
CULTURE: As'ad Kamal Muhammad al-Hashimi, Sunni Arab
PLANNING: Ali Baban, Sunni Arab, Tawafuq
HIGHER EDUCATION: Abid Diyab al-Ajili, Sunni Arab, Tawafuq.
COMMUNICATIONS: Muhammad Allawi, Shia Arab, Iraqiyya
JUSTICE: Hashim al-Shibli, Sunni Arab, Iraqiyya
SCIENCE AND TECH.: Ra'id Fahmi, Sunni Arab, Iraqiyya
HUMAN RIGHTS: Wijdan Salem, Chaldo-Assyrian, Iraqiyya
ENVIRONMENT: Narmine Othman, Kurdish, PUK
EDUCATION: Khudayr al-Khuza'i, UIC
TRANSPORT: Dr. Karim Mahdi Salih, UIC
HEALTH: Dr. Ali Shammari, Shia Arab, UIC Sadrist
MUNIC. AND PUBLIC WORKS: Riyadh Ghurayyib, UIC, Badr
Organization
TRADE: Abd al-Falah Sudany, Shia Arab, UIC Da'wa Tanzim
AGRICULTURE: Dr. Yu'arib Nadhim Al-'Abudi, UIC
LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS: Mahmoud Muhammad Jawad al-Radhi,
UIC, Independent Shia
DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION: Dr. Abd al-Samad Rahman Sultan,
UIC.
YOUTH AND SPORTS: Jasim Muhammad Jafar, Turkmen, UIC

The "State" Ministries:

NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS: Under the temporary direction of
DPM Salih.
PARLIAMENT AFFAIRS: Safa ad-Din al-Safi, Shia Arab, UIC
Independent
TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES: Liwa Sumaysim, UIC, Sadrist
FOREIGN AFFAIRS: Rafia al-Issawi, Sunni Arab, Tawafuq
CIVIL SOCIETY: Adil Al-Asadi, UIC
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS: Fatin Abd al-Rahman Mahmoud
GOVERNORATES AFFAIRS: Dr. Sa'ad Tahir al-Hashimi
NATIONAL DIALOGUE AFFAIRS: Akram al-Hakim, UIC

Ministers of State without portfolio:

-- Muhammad Abbas al-Uraybi, Iraqiyya
-- Ali Muhammad Ahmad, Sunni Kurd, Kurdistan Islamic Union
-- Hassan Radhi Kadhim al-Sari, UIC, Independent Shia
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